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THE RHETORIC OF WOUNDS: PERSUASION IN *JULIUS CAESAR*

> *... blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*

The connections among unmediated communication, emotions and the visual are quite striking throughout *Julius Caesar*. Preparing for his speech, Antony remarks on this relationship so vital to his public performance:

> Passion, I see, is catching, for mine eyes,
> Seeing those beads of sorrow stand in thine,
> Began to water.
>
> (*Caes.*3.1.282-4)

His own passion and his tears - "[h]is eyes are red as fire with weeping" (*Caes.*3.2.116) - are caught by his stage audience by the end of his speech: indeed, the oration he is performing is really aimed at infecting the audience with this passion, at transferring the fire of his eyes to the audience, to the city of Rome and in the end, to the houses of the city as well. Antony's tears, quoted above, and the fire of his speech ("It will inflame you, it will make you mad", *Caes.*3.2.145) are actually inflaming the city:

> *First Plebeian*
> We'll burn his body in the holy place,
> And with the brands fire the traitors' houses.
> *Second Plebeian*
> Go fetch fire.
>
> (*Caes.*3.2.255-256)

Both of Antony's aims are achieved by fire: fire will exalt Caesar and fire will revenge him; what is more, it is fire from Caesar's funeral pyre that will burn the houses of the traitors. One of the questions I am trying to answer in this essay could also be formulated along these lines: how is it that Coriolanus, whose eye, we are told, is "[r]ed as 'twould burn Rome" (*Cor.*5.1.64), does not inflame anyone, and how does he come to turn back before he would forge "himself a name o'th'fire / Of burning Rome" (*Cor.*5.1.14-5)? How do his eyes, his fire differ from Antony's?

To catch fire and to catch sight of something are brought into a suggestive relationship with each other in the passages quoted above. To apply the language used by the characters: the fire of Antony's eyes is spreading, as a natural force, one thing catching fire from another. This language seems to imply no conscious intervention whatsoever: passion, of which eye and tears are the outward expression, is caught like fire, unknowingly, by way of contact, without mediation. Like fire, it is elementary and overwhelming; and it is also unlimited and complete in regard to the object inflamed - once caught on fire, the whole is on fire: it is an all-inclusive, presumably irreversible change, transforming, like fire the city into charcoal, the whole personality into something not necessarily rich, but without fail new and strange. The well-known Shakespearean "eye / I" pun is partly suggestive of this expressive property of the eyes, but a passage from Quintilian's *Institutions* can also be helpful in elucidating it[1]: writing about the eloquence of the eyes, and asserting that "by far the greatest influence is exercised by the eye" (XI.iii.72), Quintilian says that "nature has given them tears to serve as interpreters of our feelings [lacrimas iis natura mentis indices dedit], tears that will break forth for sorrow or stream for very joy." (XI.iii.75) The conjunction between eyes, tears, and fire can be tracked down as a commonplace, transmitted by classical and Renaissance rhetoric, finding its way into Shakespeare's texts, and becoming what might now be looked upon as verbal echoes in, in this case, *Julius Caesar*. In Quintilian we read: "Will [the judge] shed tears if the pleader's eyes are dry? It is utterly impossible. Fire alone can kindle" (VI.ii.27-28); this seems then to have been remembered by Thomas Wilson, when he writes:

> There is no substance of it self, that wil take fire, excepte ye put fire to it. Likewise no mannes nature is so apt, streight to be heated, except the

1 This is not intended as a tongue-in-cheek remark establishing an institutionalist view of interpretation - not, at least, directly.

> Orator himself, be on fire, and brynge his heat with hym. It is a common saiyng, nothyng kyndeleth soner than fire. [...] Again, nothing moysteth soner than water. Therefore a weping iye causeth muche moysture, and provoketh teares. (273 / Fol. 73^{v})

The metaphor of fire is commonly used with reference to the persuasive impact of emotions expressed, to describe the immediate visual presence of someone's excitement on the audience[2], thus forging a link between vision and immediacy. However, there is something uncanny about this apparent reliance on direct emotional surge in manuals of rhetoric, that is, in what were manuals instructing speakers to move their audiences by cunning, calculated effects. Before looking into this question more closely, let us briefly consider some of the more disturbing consequences of the imagery of eyes and tears. Tears blur the sight, they distort or at least interfere with what is more often than not supposed to be the organ of objective perception. In spite of this, in *Julius Caesar*, it is Antony, the crying one, who seems to get things right, whose in*sight*s seem to work and become accepted, whereas the dry-eyed conspirators, who only talk about weeping (cp. Brutus: "As Caesar loved me, I weep for him", *Caes.*3.2.24), in Titinius' words "misconstrue everything" (*Caes.*5.3.84)[3]. Dry eyes with clear sight, then, may prove to be unable to construe and construct the world sensibly, whereas blurred sight may construct the world in a clearly profitable way. The ability to move depends on the capability of being moved. Once moved, one can transform the world by moving others: once on fire, one can set the world on fire: whereas clear sight, at least according to this metaphor, is bound to be ineffectual. In this context, to be "constant as the northern star" (*Caes.*3.1.60) rings rather ominously, as does the fact that Brutus cannot be moved by Portia - i.e., not well enough to make him actually tell her about his secrets: the only real response she ever gets is "Leave me with haste" (*Caes.*2.1.233-309). Antony cries,

2 cp. also Cicero: *De Oratore*, presumably the source for Quintilian, but certainly an earlier example indicating the prevalence of the metaphor: "For just as there is no substance so ready to take fire, as to be generally flame without the application of a spark, so also there is no mind so ready to absorb an orator's influence, as to be inflammable when the assailing speaker is not himself aglow with passion." (II.xlv.190)

3 My argument is not hindered by the fact that earlier in this scene Cassius needs someone to report on the proceeding of the battle because his "sight was ever thick" (*Caes.*5.3.21). Brutus's self-deceit, for example, has long been a stock part of *Julius Caesar*-criticism. And all in all, the tragic fall itself is suggestive of a misunderstanding of the world.

and his tearful eyes not only grasp the situation, but also transform it: so he survives.

Sir Philip Sidney's *Apology for Poetry* is presumably the best-known piece using this language of seeing from among all discursive (i.e. non-poetic) texts of the English Renaissance. Some of Quintilian's rather suggestive passages quoted above are matched closely by Sidney's portrayals of the quasi-visual aspect of poetic communication[4]:

> whatsoever the philosopher saith should be done, [the poet] giveth a perfect picture of it in some one by whom he presupposeth it was done, so as he coupleth the general notion with the particular example. A perfect picture I say, for he yieldeth to the powers of the mind an image of that whereof the philosopher bestoweth but a wordish description, which doth neither strike, pierce, nor possess the sight of the soul so much as that other doth.
>
> (Sidney 107. 9-17)

Effects of good poetry are repeatedly described in visual terms: things "lie dark before the imaginative and judging power, if they be not illuminated or figured forth by the speaking picture of poesy" (107. 32-4); "all virtues, vices and passions so in their own natural seats laid to the view, that we seem not to hear of them, but clearly to see through them" (108. 16-8); "me seems I see before my eyes the lost child's disdainful prodigality ..." (109. 7-8), etc.[5] Instead of the general / generalizing concepts of philosophy, of discursive language, it is the particular, the specific that is considered more effective. Poetic language, with its preference

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4 The *Apology* is treated here not as a theory of poetry, but as a text in which a fairly consistent theory of communication is manifesting itself (cp. Robinson 136). For the same reason, only those aspects of Sidney's work which are relevant to our present interest are dealt with here.

5 At this point, I must stress that my interest in Sidney's ideas springs from an interest in the history and the impact of a metaphor prevalent in European thought since at least Plato (cp. Robinson's first two chapters on the history of what he calls "visual epistemology"), and that I have serious doubts about the applicability of these terms as a contemporary critical framework in the stylistic analysis of the "picturesque" aspect of, usually, *The New Arcadia*: in critical exercises rejoicing in pointing out how closely Sidney followed his own ideas. Sidney's terminology does not seem to imply the use of any particular style, and to my mind, the specific verbal, stylistic consequences of his remarks (if any) are far from clear. This is why I consider e.g. Farmer's chapter on Sidney (in this otherwise very informative book) an evident failure: after some really sensitive comments on the *Apology*, he falls back on the well-worn parallelisms between the stylistic ideal (supposedly) outlined in it and the style of Sidney's later prose.

for the particular, the sensual, is the language that can come closest to the ideal form of immediate communication: the poet

> beginneth not with obscure definitions, which must blur the margents with interpretations, and load the memory with doubtfulness; but he cometh to you with words set in delightful proportion [...]
> (113. 24-7)

Apart from sights, it is this type of language that can transmit the *"Idea* or fore-conceit of the work", "delivering them in such excellency as he hath imagined them." (101. 4-7) The written, the discursive, the "to be interpreted" is never spoken of in favourable terms: when briefly reflecting on contemporary English literature, he criticizes the songs and sonnets, i.e. love poetry, of his age for not being persuasive enough: he argues that many of these writings,

> if I were a mistress, would never persuade me they were in love; so coldly they apply fiery speeches, as man that had rather read lovers' writings [...] than in truth they feel those passions, which easily (as I think) may be betrayed by that same forcibleness or *energia* (as the Greeks call it) of the writer. (137. 33-138. 3)

It is the text, the written, that proves forceless when compared with "true feeling": and true feeling is in turn characterized by that *energia* which (as characterized by Quintilian)

> Cicero calls illumination and actuality, which makes us seem not so much to narrate as to exhibit the actual scene, while our emotions will be no less actively stirred than if we were present at the actual occurrence.
> (Quintilian VI. ii. 32)

Sidney is here juxtaposing the immediacy of the visual with the secondary characteristic of the text, designating the text as something capable of a certain value as a surrogate, standing in for the missing immediate presence: it only gains importance when it is capable of creating the illusion of the natural sign.[6] Poetry is the kind of text which transcends its textuality, and its import and efficacy are explained by Sidney as flowing from this ability to transcend. The force of poetry (and similarly, the force of rhetoric) is by no means unique to poetic texts, but

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6 cp. Krieger's *Ekphrasis*, an astonishing book on this immense topic.

rather a force no other text but poetry seems to have: it is a force typical for sights and images, shared by no other text but poetry. It is the visual that moves us: what we see, whether with our eyes or inwardly, does definitely affect us. "Whom do not the words of Turnus move, the tale of Turnus having planted his image in the imagination?" (114. 14-6): for "the image of each action stirreth and instructeth the mind" (119. 27-8). Poetry is more powerful than e.g. philosophy - and, since the argument is in fact identical, good oratory is more persuasive than monotonously argumentative talk[7] - because the text "giveth a perfect picture" instead of a "wordish description", that is, it is able to create an illusion of sights. It is the power to move[8] that distinguishes poetry from other texts, and this power appears to be flowing from the quasi-visual nature of poetic texts. It is because of this quality that it is said to "strike, pierce" (107. 15-6).

Emotion, vision and persuasion appear to be rather strongly interrelated in Sidney as well as in the claims made by the terminology of Antony's speech (claims not to be mixed up with Antony's personal convictions)[9]. In both texts, in the oration in *Julius Caesar* and in the treatise, the transmission of visual (or quasi-visual) images is treated as the ultimate aim of persuasive communication[10],

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7 cp. the first objection against the poetry referred to: "would never persuade me". The argument of the manuals of rhetoric is perceivably present, right beneath the surface of the *Apology*.

8 Poetry is of higher standing than the philosopher, because "no man is so much *philophilosophos* as to compare the philosopher in moving with the poet. And that moving is of a higher degree than teaching, it may by this appear, that it is well nigh the cause and the effect of teaching." (112. 28-32) As with texts and sights, so with *gnosis* and *praxis*: text (*gnosis*) is only useful as an aid, leading to the illusion of a sight, *gnosis* only seems only to be important as something leading to *praxis*.

9 Shakespeare's use of Quintilian was noted early. Baldwin discusses it at length, also drawing attention to the relationship between *Hamlet* and Book VI of Quintilian to the final conclusion that "It was clearly Quintilian who shaped Hamlet's thought here." He quotes the Hecuba-monologue, and juxtaposes it with the following passage, a clue for another essay possibly: "I have often seen actors, both in tragedy and comedy, leave the theatre still drowned in tears after concluding the performance of some moving role. But if the mere delivery of words written by another has the power to set our souls on fire with fictitious emotions, what will the orator do whose duty it is to picture to himself the facts and who has it in his power to feel the same emotion as his client whose interests are at stake?" (Quintilian VI.ii.35) Baldwin points out that "... it is Quintilian on the affections, passions or emotions who is shaping Hamlet's thought throughout this crucial section", but he does not go into the details of this theory, and makes no references to this aspect of *Julius Caesar* either. (Baldwin II.204-6)

10 The claims made in the preceding passages are not, of course, new: cp. e.g. Farmer, who claims that in the *Apology*, "sensible precepts are a key to verbal communication" (9), and Robinson's thorough-going analyses devoted to Sidney's essay and its philosophical contexts.

and verbal communication only as a mere, though unavoidable substitute for them. It is therefore not surprising that at the climax of his speech - of a speech quite obsessed with these issues, with *apocalypse* in the sense previously suggested, i.e. in the sense of unveiling "truth" - Antony is switching from verbal rhetoric to what seems to be direct reference to the visual. The lifting of Caesar's mantle is literally an *apocalypse*, an unveiling of something; and what else could be unveiled, but truth. The truth in this case is Caesar's body and the fact that he has been murdered. It needs no argumentation, no reasoning, everyone can see it, and seeing, as we all know, is believing. All Antony is doing is disclosing the body, and the plebeians respond immediately: "O piteous spectacle! O noble Caesar! O woeful day! O traitors! villains! O most bloody sight! Revenge! About! Seek! Burn! Fire! Kill! Slay! Let not a traitor alive." (3.2.199-206) They seem to be moved by the image just the way Quintilian surmised they would, and Antony wanted them to be. But let us give their lines a self-conscious, or self-referential reading. "O piteous spectacle! [...] O most bloody sight!" That it is, indeed. But is this *the truth*, this spectacle, this sight? In what respect, and how, can a sight be true, or even Truth? And how immediate is the response really?

The power of eloquence and persuasion was often described and praised in the Renaissance.[11] To persuade, that is, to move by means of eloquence, was

11 In one of the introductory chapters of the Third Book of Puttenham's *The Arte of English Poesie*, a character of an anecdote starts to tell an anecdote to "certaine Doctours of the ciuil law":

> [...] if perswasions were not very violent, to the minde of man it could not have wrought so strange an effect as we read that it did once in AEgypt, and would haue told the whole tale at large, if the Magistrate had not passed it ouer very pleasantly. Now to tell you the whole matter as the gentleman intended, thus it was. There came into AEgypt a notable Oratour, whose name was *Hegesias* who inueyed so much against the incomodities of this transitory life, and so highly commended death the dispatcher of all euils; as a great number of his hearers destroyed themselues, some with weapon, some with poyson, others by drowning and hanging themselues to be rid out of this vale of misery, in so much as it was feared least many moe of the people would haue miscaried by occasion of his perswasions, if king *Ptolome* had not made a publicke proclamation, that the Oratour should auoyde the countrey, and no more be allowed to speake in any matter. Whether now perswasions, may not be said violent and forcible to simple myndes in speciall, I referre it to all mens iudgements that heare the story. (Puttenham 141)

considered as perhaps the most important of the three traditional aims of rhetoric: *movere, docere & delectare*[12]. As for the means to achieve this, Quintilian, one of the major classical authorities on rhetoric in the Renaissance, devotes Chapter 2 of the Sixth Book of his *Institutio* to questions of emotional appeal and its role in persuasion[13]. He ascribes great importance to the link between images (visions) and the effectiveness of eloquence. What follows is an outline of his argument:

> The prime essential for stirring the emotions of others is, in my opinion, first to feel those emotions oneself. [...] if we wish to give our words the appearance of sincerity, we must assimilate ourselves to the emotions of those who are genuinely so affected, and our eloquence must spring from the same feeling that we desire to produce in the mind of the judge. [...] But how are we to generate these emotions in ourselves, since emotion is not in our own power? [...] There are certain experiences which the Greeks call *phantasiai* and the Romans *visions*, whereby things absent are presented to our imagination with such extreme vividness that they seem actually to be before our very eyes. It is the man who is really sensitive to such impressions who will have the greatest power over the emotions. [...] it may be possible to turn this form of hallucination to some profit. I am complaining that a man has been murdered. [...] Shall I not bring before my eyes all the circumstances [...]? [...] Shall I not see the fatal blow delivered and the stricken body fall? Will not the blood, the deathly pallor, the groan of agony, the death-rattle, be indelibly impressed upon my mind?
> From such impressions arises that *enargeia* which Cicero calls illumination and actuality, which makes us seem not so much to narrate as to exhibit the actual scene, while our emotions will be no less actively stirred than if we were present at the actual occurrence.
> (Quintilian VI.ii.26-32)

(I have selected this particular passage for the subtly self-reflective closure, which in its attempt to persuade the reader utilizes a "scheme" very similar to the one introduced by Antony's speech, namely that it disclaims authority and thus helps the reader to accommodate the indoctrinated meaning as obvious.) We may find similar stories in many other contemporary works on rhetoric and poetics, most of them anecdotes from the classics, told again and again, as the one on Hercules both by Puttenham (142) and Wilson (19).

12 "move, teach, please": the three aims are a set list since at least Quintilian (III.V.2); cp. also Vickers 136

13 As for the importance of Quintilian: "Erasmus in *De Conscribendis Epistolis* had referred all learned grammarians to Quintilian's as the best treatment of the affects." (Baldwin II.206, note 32)

These passages are to be found in the book dealing with the peroration, the closing part of the oration, which is "the most important part of forensic pleading and in the main consists of appeals to the emotions" (Quintilian VI.ii.1). The argument quoted shall now serve as a guideline for some further remarks about (tacit) assumptions and traditions governing the utilization of the visual.

Quintilian regards (!) visual images as central to persuasion. It appears that the process is something like image-text-image, where text is only used for the transmission of the "real thing", of the visual, which, once "translated" from the text, can be present to the mind without further mediation, and hence exert immense power over emotions, the faculty which is the place of "unmediated", non-discursive processes. In this view, mental processes are evidently visual, and the medium of understanding is identical with that of visual perception. This implies, that visual messages are compatible with, and can enter immediately, the process of thinking. Indeed, the aim even of the non-emotional type of peroration, the enumeration and repetition of the facts, to which Quintilian devotes a single paragraph only, is to "place the whole of the case before [the judge's] eyes." (Quintilian VI.i.1) Even the vulnerable and necessarily imperfect, because verbal, transmission of the image can be supported, and its effects enhanced by visual means, by gestures and by exhibiting strong emotions, suggesting strong involvement. These ideas have become - some of them had probably always been - commonplaces by the Renaissance. In Thomas Wilson's *Arte of Rhetorique* for example we read:

> In movyng affections, and stirryng the judges to be greved, the weight of the matter must be so set forth, as though they saw it plaine before their iyes, ..."
>
> (269 / S4^{v})

When discussing the effects and aims of rhetoric, Quintilian suggests that persuasion is not sufficient as a definition of rhetoric, since

> many other things have the power of persuasion, such as money, influence, the authority and rank of the speaker, or even some *sight unsupported by language*, when for instance the place of words is supplied by the memory of some individual's great deeds, by his lamentable appearance or the beauty of his person. Thus when Antonius in the course of his defence of Manius Aquilius tore open his client's robe and revealed the honourable scars which he had acquired while facing his country's foes, he relied no longer on the power of his

> eloquence, but appealed directly to the eyes of the Roman people. And it is believed that they were so profoundly moved by the sight as to acquit the accused. Again there is a speech of Cato, to mention no other records, which informs us that Servius Galba escaped condemnation solely by the pity which he aroused not only by producing his own young children before the assembly, but by carrying round in his arms the son of Sulpicius Gallus. So also according to general opinion Phryne was saved not by the eloquence of Hyperides, admirable as it was, but by the sight of her exquisite body, which she further revealed by drawing aside her tunic.
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> (Quintilian II.xv.6-9. italics mine)[14]

Quintilian is referring to sights "unsupported by language", and in the concluding part of this chapter he is asserting with Plato that rhetoric and the search for truth cannot be separated. The rhetoric of Platonism relies quite heavily on the metaphorical identification of seeing and knowing. Plato is the fountainhead - or arguably, the first notable representative - of the long and meandering tradition of visual epistemology in European thought. It is in Plato that we first encounter the elaboration of this equation of seeing and knowing,[15] the presumption of an inherence of meanings, and where interpretation and understanding are first conceived as passive processes of unearthing these meanings. Knowledge of something in this view is not a construct, but a mirror-image of the object's idea.[16] Inquiry is at most a process of removing the obstacles potentially disturbing the view: and truth is arrived at by contemplating the object cleared of all misconceptions. This notion of truth and understanding is very common and almost "natural" to us, an instinctual fulfillment of the "logocentric desire", of the desire for the natural sign, for absolute, unquestionable, transcendental meanings. Quintilian seems to be taking a clearly anti-rhetorical stand here: but in fact, despite this theoretical position, we have already cited (and will later cite) some passages which suggest that in rhetorical practice he is actually endorsing the utilization of what is excluded here from the domain of rhetoric proper, from the domain of artful verbal argumentation. Furthermore, his description of these

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14 The same story about Antonius defending Manius Aquilius is narrated in Cicero's dialogue, *De Oratore*, by Antonius himself. NB, this Antonius, also Marcus, is not identical with Shakespeare's Mark Antony, but his grandfather. The two Marcus Antonius were often mixed up or simply identified by 16th century readers.

15 cp. Robinson 16ff on this issue.

16 On the conceptual problems arising from the picture-theory of knowledge, cp. Mitchell, Chapter 1.

sights as "unsupported by language" is - at least to some extent - immediately qualified by pointing out the link between the sight and what one might as well interpret as internalized texts: the memory of great deeds. The sights, though not coupled with explicit verbal comments, exert their power over the audience through the texts and contexts they call to the audience's, the judges' mind. First and most importantly, all his examples are from the courtroom, and are instances of moving the judges to decide favourably, so it is not very difficult to see that, rather than advocating the Platonic, anti-rhetorical view of images, rhetoric does indeed utilize the instinctual desire after the "real" by putting sights to action in a rhetorical way. It is in well-calculated moments, with taking related contexts into account, that sights are employed. Their purpose is not conveying truth - which does not mean they are used for concealing it: the criterion of truth simply does not apply in this context -, but obtaining a favourable decision.

It is in this context of forensic pleading that the question of truth and of the relationship between rhetoric and truth is now to be reconsidered. The anti-rhetorical, Platonic concept of truth is perhaps best visualised (?) embodied (?) by the idea of "naked truth", *nuda veritas*, implying that truth is something only to be revealed.[17] In Peacham's *Minerva Britannica*, an important collection of emblems published in 1612, *Veritas* is represented as "A beauteous maide", naked, who is, we are informed by the accompanying text, "of old depainted so". This of course immediately recalls the passage about Phryne disclosing her body which was quoted earlier as Quintilian's example of the efficacy of "sights unsupported by language". But the sight of Phryne's "exquisite body", and the way its disclosure is utilized, are suggestive of an understanding of truth opposing the version we have roughly termed as "Neoplatonic". In our - arguably fallen - world, at least one sense of truth is what the court decides; and more generally, what the consensus of society considers as such. In such a situation, rhetoric is neither the art of deceit, nor a technique of presenting truth in a favourable form,

17 In Christianity, the idea of arriving at truth by revelation has assumed further "metaphysical" relevance, a fact tying in neatly with our claim that it is an idea which is "metaphysical" in the Derridean sense as well, based on the assumption that meaning is somehow inherent, i.e. motivated. Apart from the Book of Revelation, where the final reunion of the fallen world with the Word is revealed, the prefigurations of the Apocalypse are quite revealing: the moment when Jesus is dying on the Cross, all three synoptic Gospels report that "the veil of the Temple was rent twain from the top to the bottom" (Matthew 27,51; cp. Mark 15,38 and Luke 23,45), i.e., the Holy of Holies, never to be entered or seen, was laid bare. The moment of our salvation is the moment of truth.

but the very means by which truth is made. Truth is a social construct, the meaning (or value) commonly attached to something: and Phryne's naked body, in this interpretation, though by no means identical with, is nevertheless certainly related to it: it is the sight of her body that makes the consensus change. Phryne's body is put to double action: on the one hand, by revealing her body, Phryne is staging the very idea exploited by the process of visual persuasion, i.e. that truth is arrived at by revelation or seeing: in front of her judges, her body appears as *nuda veritas*. On the other hand, her sexual appeal is exerting huge manipulative force on the judges. One aspect of her self-exposure is then tropically reasserting the traditional framework of attitudes which contribute to the favourable interpretation of the other, literally seductive aspect.

A closer look at Peacham's emblem may also warn us against an unconditional reliance on sights as true meanings. First of all: there is an explanatory poem establishing the meaning of the image. Seeing Truth does not seem to be enough to recognize her, and, looking at the image, it is easy to see why. Although she is described as "naked", she is not: to put it bluntly, the main point is covered by a veil. Although an image of Truth, it is not quite true, i.e., not quite in accordance with the meaning ascribed to it by the text. A verbal framing seems to be necessary for eliciting the desired effect, the interpretation aimed at. But there is an even more disturbing potentiality lurking around the image itself. It is literally framed by an ornament which is swarming with snakes, framing her as Eve, already conscious of her nudity. If she is Truth, she is Truth after the Fall. And if she is nevertheless presented as Truth, this might imply that Truth can only be fallen, surprised by sin. Satan, as we know, is the arch-rhetorician.[18] It seems that images are fallen with the word: that meaning itself is the result of the Fall.

The latter aspect of Truth's (and Phryne's) nudity takes us to the domain of images. Whenever a distinction was made between the sensual and the intellectual faculties of the mind, images were always supposed to have sensual, emotional, rather than intellectual appeal or influence.[19] Conceptually, the visual was almost invariably coupled with the corporeal as opposed to the intellectual / spiritual.

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18 Fish's favourite point, made both in *Surprised by Sin*, and in his "Rhetoric", in: Fish (1989), 471-502.

19 The distinction was never made in mysticism, and it was not quite clear the Neoplatonic tradition, either: there, the visual was identified with the intellectual. Cp. Robinson, chapter 1.

The values attached to each were changing, but the general meaning was constant: according to Ben Jonson, e.g., "the pen is more noble than the pencil. For that can speak to the understanding; the other, but to the sense." (*Discoveries* 1872-5)[20] Arguably, the most important context of the sensuality of images in 16th century England was the problematics of idolatry. The key text is in Exodus 20, where the creation and adoration of the golden calf is clearly linked with lustfulness and unbridled sensuality, indeed nakedness: coming down from the Mount Sinai, Moses "saw that the people were naked" (Exodus 32,25): and we were also reported previously, that as soon as the idol was ready, they "sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play" (Exodus 32,6).[21] The golden calf, the idol, is set in clear-cut opposition with the law in these passages, not only with the commandment against graven images, but with the Ten Commandments in general, with the Text of the Law Moses is bringing with him.

The sensual influence of what is seen, of the image, effects destabilization, liberates from deliberation and releases from the control of pre*scriptions*. To a certain extent, the iconoclasts' fear of images is also rooted in this conviction: the terminology of their invectives relies quite heavily on contrasting images with the (male) social and moral order and on the exclusion of images from it. Possibly the most common metaphor used is that of whoring.[22] Ridley's "Treatise", for example, listing the objections of the scriptures and of other authorities against images, is also falling back upon this discourse of exclusion and also disgust:

> They are called in the book of Wisdom, the trap and snare of the feet of the ignorant.
> It is said, the invention of them was the beginning of spiritual fornication; [...] Images have their beginning from the heathen [...]
> (Ridley 85)

20 It is well-known that Jonson's attitude towards the two types of signification was, to say the least, ambiguous. The value-judgment quoted above is, for example, not to be mistaken for a final word about the issue in the *Discoveries*: a couple of pages later, he goes on to say that "[t]he conceits of the mind are pictures of things, and the tongue is the interpreter of those pictures" (2635-7) For a discussion of Jonson's ambivalent attitude towards images and also towards the word-image relationship, cp. Gilman (1986) 50-4.

21 See Freedberg's fascinating book, and on this topic especially the chapter on "Idolatry and Iconoclasm", 378-428. I am fully aware that he would not like my crude textualization of emotional responses: but this dissertation is not meant to be an essay on images and sights, but on the rhetorical and textual uses of sights.

22 cp. Phillips, *passim*, and also Collinson 25, Diehl 55, Gilman (1986) 41 for further examples.

and concludes (indeed, keeps concluding) that

> images, being "Meretrices," *id est*, "Whores" - for that the worshipping of them is called in the prophets fornication and adultery - ought to be banished
>
> (Ridley 87)

In Puritanism, images are not the sensual way leading to higher spiritual insights, they are not moments or places of revelation, or manifestations of the transcendental - as they were in medieval (and to a certain extent in post-reformation catholic) Christianity[23] -, but rather whores distracting and seducing honourable citizens by revealing their faithless, marketed bodies. There are, however, several intellectual strands of Protestantism in the 16th-17th centuries, and it is a telling fact that a noticeable proponent of the prominence of the visual, Sir Philip Sidney was of Protestant religion himself. If one is now ready to abandon the dubious dualism of (crypto)catholicism vs. puritan iconoclasm[24], a most notable practice and also implicit theory of the contextualization of images and sights can be taken into consideration.

Protestant critics of Catholic images do not normally condemn images in general, or images as evil objects themselves, but their misuse by the beholders.[25] Many even of the most ardent iconoclasts, advocating the destruction of all images, made their point claiming that it is better to abolish them all and get rid of the problem categorically only because of the risk of misuse, misinterpretation: because of the danger of abusage, that is. The distinction of abused and unabused images helps to contextualize the whore-metaphor: for puritan fundamentalists, a legitimate, as it were "marital" relationship with images was simply inconceivable, since any sexual and also any sensual relationship was abusive by definition[26]. But

23 Catholic images were "manifesting the divine by means of tangible material objects. [...] Popular attitudes of the late Middle Ages had identified Catholic images as the repositories of truth that they represented." (King 155) cp. also: Diehl 55-6, and Phillips, *passim*, esp. 27ff.

24 This step is not always taken by surveys of 16th-17th c. intellectual history. One of the instructive exceptions is Collinson's distinction between iconoclasm and iconophobia, the first referring not to the destruction, but to the transformation of images.

25 The discussion of this aspect of iconoclasm is based on the closely argued and extensively illustrated work of Diehl, Gilman (1986), King, and Phillips.

26 The parallel between beholding images and sexuality, between images and femininity is by no means arbitrary here: irrespective of the sides taken in the iconophobia-iconophilia question, there is a long tradition which the identification with whoring is only one manifestation of: cp. e.g. Mitchell 116-149.

the widely accepted notion, perceptively summed up by Phillips, that "it is what we make of images - their implications and their abuses - that makes them idols or not" (92), does conceptually allow for justifiable uses of images as well. Making use of their persuasive power, images can be employed as commemorative aids: as it is that which the viewer makes of images that determines their value, careful con*text*ualization can vouch for their proper use and fend off the danger of idolatry. Conforming to the Law, the Text, the Scriptures can control images much as they control sexuality, allowing and in fact supporting marriage and condemning extramarital sex: women and images are only dangerous when out of control.

Protestant emblematics, as opposed to its Catholic, and in geographical terms southern, Italian counterpart, is characterized by the preeminence of the word over the image following from the position outlined above.[27] In the Protestant emblem, the accompanying text is not a secondary aid in approaching the higher realities manifested by the image, but the indispensable means of providing the meaning which is then internalized with the help of the image. Although text and image are mutually interdependent, images are used as arbitrary signs, signifying the invisible by analogy, the meaning of which signification is by no means intrinsic or natural as they were in the medieval / Catholic epistemology, but imposed by interpretation. Rather than the extreme purism of iconophobia, this seems to be the genuine subversion of the Neoplatonic assertion, epitomized by Sidney's *Apology*, according to which thought is a visual process itself, and text only a passive medium transmitting visual meaning.

In the Protestant understanding of emblems, the text is not an interpreter in the sense of mere translation of a preexisting meaning[28], but the source of meanings: it establishes the relationship between sign and signified, image and sense. The stability of the meaning of images is only secured by the stability of the

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27 Huston Diehl's article, along with other recent inquiries into protestant poetics - such as Barbara K. Lewalski's and Gilman's work -, is crucial for this distinction marked out between the Catholic and the Protestant emblem tradition, left out of consideration by much of the earlier literature on the emblem.

28 In *Discoveries*, Ben Jonson is using the word "interpreter" in this, "neoplatonic" sense: "[t]he conceits of the mind are pictures of things, and the tongue is the interpreter of those pictures. The order of God's creatures in themselves, is not only admirable, and glorious, but eloquent: then he who could apprehend the consequence of things in their truth, and utter his apprehensions as truly, were the best writer, or speaker." (*Discoveries* 2635-43, quoting his friend's, Hoskyns' *Direccons for Speech and Style* 116, in: Loise Brown Osborn: *The Life, Letters, and Writings of John Hoskyns*, Yale Studies in English LXXXVII. YUP, New Haven, 1937).

meaning of the Text, which in turn is safeguarded by the workings of the Holy Spirit. The spiritual does not reside in the image, it is only represented in it: and representation itself is a process carried out by the spiritual. The visual thus ceases to be the source of, and also the instrument of nailing down, textual meanings. Such an understanding of meaning and interpretation has another far-reaching consequence: if it is only the Text, and interpretation conceived as textual meaning-imposition, that can provide meanings, then there is no meaning residing in the World, only in the Word. Images only differ from other objects in their constructedness, and as far as meaning is concerned, their status is identical. The objects surrounding us can only mean something when interpreted, thus, everything can be, and in point of fact is, a sign, but it has to be interpreted, that is, taken to be a sign if it is to mean anything.[29] All that is being looked at turns into a visual sign, into an image, i.e., is seen as an image: there are no natural sights. As Ernst Gombrich, and later, quoting him (and also making Gombrich's original point stronger), Nelson Goodman have put it, "there is no innocent eye". Everything that is being looked at is being looked at, and, as a result, is being seen, *as something*, i.e. *in terms of something*, and the way we look and see is determined, or formed by our assumptions and persuasions.

It is common knowledge that the image and the text of the emblem were frequently regarded as body and soul.[30] This seems to imply that when lacking a verbal soul, the image is but an inert body: and indeed, we find George Wither, for instance, describing his emblems as "quickened with metrical illustrations"[31], and it is quite easy to see how

> [s]uch usage testifies to the enduring strength of the belief, which rhetoric had encouraged, that it was words, not images, which gave the truest representation, and that it was only when pictures spoke that they could come to life.
>
> (Bath 54)

Pictures, however, cannot speak: nor can dead bodies. Somebody must speak for them in such way that we may take those words to be the object's. "They beg the voice and utterance of [our] tongue" (*Caes.*3.1.261) - but once it is made to speak, who could tell, who is speaking for whom: is it the object, the image, that

29 On the problems of visual meanings, Goodman and Danto are immensely suggestive.

30 cp. e.g. Gilman 15, Bath *passim*, esp. 138 ff.

31 cited by Bath 54.

has begged our voice, or is it us, who are now bidding it "speak for [us]" (*Caes.*3.2.226)? This ambiguity and interchangeability of object and subject is crucial to Antony's performance.

Antony's funeral oration over Caesar's corpse can easily be construed along the lines outlined above: the dead body, an object looked at by the market-place, is provided with the text necessary to its understanding. What is seen is made to speak in the way an emblem is. It is framed by words, and these words "quicken" it as Wither's (and others') "metrical illustrations" quicken the picture in the emblem. Addressing the corpse, "the ruins of the noblest man" (*Caes.*3.1.256), Antony is preparing for conjuring up the spirit:

> Over thy wounds now I do prophesy -
> Which like dumb mouths do ope their ruby lips,
> To beg the voice and utterance of my tongue -
> A curse shall light upon the limbs of men;
> Domestic fury and fierce civil strife
> Shall cumber all the parts of Italy;
> Blood and destruction shall be so in use,
> And dreadful objects so familiar,
> That mothers shall but smile when they behold
> Their infants quartered with the hands of war,
> All pity choked with custom of fell deeds;
> And Caesar's spirit, raging for revenge,
> With Ate by his side, come hot from hell,
> Shall in these confines with a monarch's voice
> Cry havoc and let slip the dogs of war,
> That this foul deed shall smell above the earth
> With carrion men, groaning for burial.
> (*Caes.*3.1.259-75)

The voice given to the wounds, to the corpse of Caesar is going to raise the spirit of Caesar, or rather, it is the voice itself that is to emerge as the spirit itself. Perhaps it is not too far-fetched to argue that Antony's prophecy is in these terms a self-fulfilling one, being a rehearsal of the funeral oration. Although only for himself - at this point, he is alone with the body -, Antony is already seen here as raising the very spirit he is talking about. He addresses the corpse as non-human, as "ruins", a "piece of earth": but through the act of addressing it, through the use of the figure of apostrophe, he is bringing it to life. As Jonathan Culler has pointed out in an essay on this trope, to apostrophize "is to will a state of affairs,

to attempt to call into being by asking inanimate objects to bend themselves to your desire" (139). Somewhat later he is even suggesting that "there is an intimate relation between apostrophes addressed to the dead or the inanimate and prosopopoeia that give the dead or inanimate a voice and make them speak" (153). Uncannily, this suggestion is made by way of citing Paul de Man: citing, that is, summoning the dead master to appear in front of our critical judgment as witness to Culler's case. In Antony's lines, there is an immense power ascribed to voice, to words: the spirit of Caesar, which is itself raised by Antony's voice lent to the corpse, is exerting its power by "a monarch's voice". The final lines of the monologue, or more precisely, of the apostrophe, are short-circuiting the elaboration of the idea: the ghostly voice cries havoc "[t]hat this foul deed shall smell above the earth / With carrion men, groaning for burial": the dead bodies are made to speak by the force of the spirit's voice.

The mischief is afoot, set by Antony's words. Suggestively, Antony addresses it in the second person when the speech is over. ("Mischief, thou art afoot", *Caes*.3.2.262) The mischief is nothing but the "spirit of Caesar raging for revenge", brought to life by the speech, the spirit that has by now overtaken the crowd, raging for revenge:

> *Second Plebeian:* We will be revenged.
> *All:* Revenge! About! Seek! Burn! Fire! Kill! Slay! Let not a traitor live."
> (*Caes*.3.2.204-6)

The spirit does really materialize in the play, as if to confirm its suggested identification with the mischief. The appearance of the spirit, prophesying defeat, is really a metaphorical equivalent of the revenging spirit defeating the conspirators by military force, i.e. in the way Antony has prophesied. The identification of Caesar's ghost, his Spirit, with the crowd's spirit, brings us back to the workings of images, since in Protestant doctrine, the image is only meaningful, that is, alive, if this meaning is conjured up in the beholders' mind from nonexistence by interpretation. The meaning becomes a material force as soon as it is constructed - it is not even the result of a response, but the response itself: it is not uncovered by interpretation, but the interpretation itself. Caesar's spirit is conjured up by Antony's words, and it takes shape as the audience's response. The response, however, is never independent: it is, as protestant emblematics suggests, fashioned by the text surrounding the objects of interpretation: that is, by its contexts, pretexts, intertexts. It is for this reason that Caesar's spirit cannot

be come by, as the conspirators assume (cp. *Caes*.2.1.167-71), by killing the body. Pursuing the metaphor, murder appears rather as releasing the spirit. By separating it from the body, the independence of Caesar's spirit from his body becomes patent.

If one identifies the spirit with the interpretation as we have (in the spirit of Protestantism), the death of the body also opens it up for interpretation and appropriation. Once the body is passed by, once it is made past, it can only speak in someone else's voice: in the voice of the beholder, the interpreter, in the voice of the one who remembers or tries to remember. As Stephen Greenblatt asserted in the Introduction to *Shakespearean Negotiations*: when listening to the dead, all we can hear is ourselves, although in many voices. The closure of a story is the point where interpretation begins, and even the present is interpreted by the imposition of closures.

Based on our preceding sketch of Neoplatonic / Catholic and of Protestant attitudes towards images, it could be argued that Protestantism situates signification and interpretation in the context of history and of the absence of the interpreted object, whereas the Neoplatonic / Catholic view appears to postulate at least a possibility of the unquestionable recovering of real presence. Interpretation conceived as (re)construction thrives on absences, and is debilitated by presence, since what it aims at is re-presentation, the creation of a substitute presence. Although the presence of the represented does not preclude representation, it certainly makes its task difficult. Presence seems to deny any point to interpretation and also to signification or communication in the sense of signifying something by means of something else. However, it also seems to make meaning and understanding impossible, since both "to mean" and "to understand" involve a relationship to something not immediately present. What is right there is not meant by something else, and also: it does not stand for something else, it does not mean anything, because meaning something would involve this "something else" not present: that is, if it meant something, it would make the present a mere sign of the absent. The present is the already understood, and, therefore, what cannot be understood. Presence is meaningless, and as soon as it starts to carry a meaning, it carries the beholder away into the realm of absence, and builds up a distance between the object and the subject. Relying on the age-old metaphor of vision, one might as well say that things touching the eye cannot be seen - to see things requires a focus, and also, a point of view. In this world, however, there only seem to be two situations one could describe as "presences" in this sense: the

moment of one's own death, and the "little death", *la petite mort*. Apart from these, life is full of meanings: even the signals of our bodies are meaning something: that we ought to eat, drink, sleep, or that someone has forgotten a dagger in our back.

Interpretation and understanding work on the past and the absent: but this work consists precisely in creating an illusion of their presence. They represent the absent - they bring it back, as it were, in an illusory way to where they have never been. They uncover a meaning which then looks as if it was "there". Meaning is illusionistic because it is not perceived as an illusion, though it is one. As soon as a meaning is uncovered as illusory, it ceases to be a real meaning. In other words, the mechanism of meaning, of sense-giving is Protestant in principle, but its perception is bound to be idolatrous: meaning has to be taken for "real" or "natural" if it is to work at all, despite the fact that it cannot be "real" or "natural" by its very nature.

If interpretation and understanding represent the absent, the past, they are also affiliated with memory. In these terms, interpretation is the creation of memories, of representations of the past. The two faculties - interpretation or understanding and memory - are also entangled with each other in Antony's oration. He is remembering Caesar, and by remembering and also making others remember him, Antony is re-membering the dismembered one, and puts together a new Caesar. It is this Caesar, re-membered, which then materializes as Caesar's spirit. Brutus' lines testify to this insight:

> O, that we then could come by Caesar's spirit,
> And not dismember Caesar!
>
> (*Caes*.2.1.169-70)

Once dismembered, he can be remembered: and he can indeed be re-membered in several ways. The arguments of rhetorical and Protestant epistemology, so far parallel, start diverging at this point. Although interpretation is conceived as construction in both, in the Protestant view interpretation can - although only *sub specie aeternitatis* - be evaluated with reference to Truth: the word and the world are judged in the face of the Word. In rhetoric, there is no Word and no world outside the word. The world of *Julius Caesar* is in this respect rhetorical (or, which is here synonymous with it, political) throughout: no view of Caesar can be absolute, any interpretation can be undermined with reference to others. It is for precisely this reason that totalizing interpretations of the play,

that is, interpretations telling us whose tragedy the play really is: Brutus' or Caesar's, are so vulnerable. Once critics take sides in the Caesar vs Brutus debate, their arguments, however cunningly formulated, can easily be undercut by dramatizing them, that is, by placing them in the context of the play itself. As the conflict of *Julius Caesar* is a conflict of interpretations of Caesar, any totalizing interpretation of Caesar will be a critical furthering of the arguments within the play. Although these critical backings can be of high interest, any interpretation of *Julius Caesar* has to take into account the play of interpretations and of the imposition of interpretations within the play.

Antony remembers a Caesar, and this meaning is powerful enough to gain the upper hand over other memories, other versions of Julius Caesar. Antony does everything to imprint this memory, this interpretation, on his audience's mind. As a matter of fact, his actions can be interpreted as closely following the rules of the art of memory, as laid down by - among others - manuals of rhetoric, from the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* on.

In the established method of artificial or place memory, texts and orations are memorized with the help of images. An image is appointed to each proposition and these images are then ordered in *loci*: i.e., the images are ordered spatially, in a building for example, and are recalled in the correct sequence by going over the places one by one in thought:

> The artificial memory includes backgrounds [*loci*, i.e. places] and images. [...] An image is, as it were, a figure, mark, or portrait of the object we wish to remember; for example, if we wish to recall a horse, a lion, or an eagle, we must place its image in a definite background. [...] [T]he backgrounds are very much like wax tablets or papyrus, the images like the letters, the arrangement and disposition of the images like the script, and the delivery is like the reading.
> (*Ad Herennium* 3.xvi.29-xvii.30)

Antony first chooses Caesar's mantle for his papyrus, and the holes on it for letters. The papyrus, i.e. the *locus* where the images are placed, must be

> such scenes as are naturally or artificially set off on a small scale, complete and conspicuous, so that we can grasp and embrace them easily by the natural memory
> (*Ad Herennium* 3.xvi.29)

- and the mantle certainly answers this description:

> You all do know this mantle. I remember
> The first time ever Caesar put it on;
> 'Twas on a summer's evening in his tent,
> That day he overcame the Nervii.
> (*Caes*.3.2.171-5)

Now the images that stand for the statements can be mounted on this background:

> Look, in this place ran Cassius's dagger through;
> See what a rent the envious Casca made;
> Through this, the well-beloved Brutus stabbed
> (*Caes*.3.2.176-8)

The images are also well chosen: the gory wounds on the vesture (*Caes*.3.2.197) are, in these terms, certainly memorable ones:

> We ought, then, to set up images of a kind that can adhere longest in the memory. And we shall do so if we establish likenesses as striking as possible; if we set up images that are not many or vague, but doing something; if we assign to them exceptional beauty or singular ugliness; if we dress some of them with crowns or purple cloaks, for example, so that the likeness may be more distinct to us; or if we somehow disfigure them, as by introducing one stained with blood or soiled with mud or smeared with red paint, so that its form is more striking [...]
> (*Ad Herennium* 3.xxii.37)

The holes on the toga are striking marks, images that stand for facts: for the daggers piercing through the toga and into Caesar's body. They are images or signs of the murderers, and also of their deeds, one by one. Their power is further enhanced by the fact that they are also the proofs of the murder, so the signs stand for an action they were a part of: as signs, they appear to signify themselves as well, thus, illusorily, abolishing the arbitrariness of signification.[32] These signs and proofs are then organized into a narrative whole, they are arranged on the

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32 This abolishment is illusory only, as it results from an identification of the sign with the object that signifies: it is like identifying the letter "a" with the pigment on the page. But, although it is easy to point out the difference between the body of the sign and the sign, the fallacy is very common, and its working is essential to an understanding of the market-place scene. Caesar's body is identified with what it signifies in Antony's interpretation in exactly the same way. And this identification of the body of the sign with what it signifies is precisely what Protestants would term "idolatry".

toga, which holds the bits of the story represented by the holes together. Quintilian ascribes great importance to narration as the basic rhetorical process, which contextualizes proofs. It is only against the perspective established in the narrative that proofs become more than "unpersuasive facts"[33]: the presentation of facts only becomes meaningful when it is interpreted by a story they prove. The background, the *locus* of the art of memory does precisely this. It frames disparate memories, so that they can be remembered as parts of a larger, visual structure, which - as suggested by Quintilian - can then be read almost as a story. Narrative and memory not only support, but also presuppose each other, and Antony's re-membering of Caesar is a highly suggestive instance of their cooperation. The plot he reveals is really emplotted by his cunning presentation.

Caesar's mantle presents the narrative of Caesar's death, and the daggers that "wounded" both the mantle and his body, seem to pin this story down to the body, contextualizing it. Again, the narrative shroud frames the body much as the text frames the image in the emblem. Caesar is now re-membered, imprinted on the memory of the crowd as the victim of cruel, envious, unkind murder: the mantle is supplied with meaning, and this meaning, the spirit, is ready to emerge from the shrouds. And it does so in the next moment: by transferring the meaning from the "wounded vesture" to the body, the meaning is embodied, and the spirit is set afoot:

> *Antony:* [...]
> O, now you weep, and I perceive you feel
> The dint of pity. These are gracious drops.
> Kind souls, what weep you when you but behold
> Our Caesar's vesture wounded? Look you here,
> Here is himself, marred, as you see, with traitors.
> *[Antony plucks off the mantle]*
> *First Plebeian:* O piteous spectacle!
> *Second Plebeian:* O noble Caesar!
> *Third Plebeian:* O woeful day!
> *Fourth Plebeian:* O traitors! villains!
> *First Plebeian:* O most bloody sight!
> *Second Plebeian:* We will be revenged.
> *All:* Revenge! About! Seek! Burn! Fire! Kill! Slay! Let not a traitor live.

33 In stressing the importance of the narrative for Quintilian, I am following John D. O'Banion's account.

Over a dead body, a monument can be erected: whether marble, gilded, or verbal, is in this respect almost irrelevant. The monument is the body created anew, an object provided with meaning, substituting the body and preserving the spirit - the spirit it is designed to preserve. "Even at the base of Pompey's statue, / Which all the while ran blood, great Caesar fell" (*Caes*.3.2.189-90), and Pompey's statue, along with other idols and monuments, is presiding over the first half of the play. It also has a further relevance to us: Plutarch gives a metaphorical interpretation to the fact that Caesar is murdered at its feet:

> Thus it seemed that the image took just revenge of Pompey's enemy, being thrown down on the ground at his feet and yielding up his ghost there for a number of wounds he had upon him.
>
> (Plutarch 95)

Against this background it is convenient to draft Antony as erecting another, this time verbal, revenging monument over the body of Caesar. This interpretation raises a further question: what sort of a body is Caesar's, lying in the market-place?

To answer this we have to look briefly at actual, i.e., marble, funeral monuments of the 15th-17th centuries. In this period, we encounter a series of monuments which look rather unusual to 20th century eyes. Erwin Panofsky describes these as a

> strange and fascinating phenomenon [...]: the placing of a "lifelike" effigy, arrayed in a costume befitting the dignity of a prince or princess, a prelate or at least a knight, on top of a "deathly" figure showing the deceased as a mere corpse, wrapped only in a shroud which may conceal his form almost entirely [...], or, conversely, may reveal as much of his nude form as was compatible with modesty, but nearly always divested of all signs of worldly power and wealth and often represented in a state of more or less advanced decomposition.
>
> (Panofsky 63-4)[34]

The *representacion de la mort*, as Panofsky calls it, quoting 16th century contracts, is a representation of the dead body, of the body that passes away, whereas the upper part of such a monument represents the personality of the deceased, his

34 For English examples, cp. Kantorowitz, figs. 28-31, and also the chapter on effigies, 419-437, elaborating the notion of the two bodies. On the distinction between natural and social bodies cp. also Llewellyn's in places somewhat inaccurate, but nevertheless useful booklet.

social stand: the dead remembered. These monuments enact the construction of the memory by setting the corpse and the social body in opposition; they represent both, but under the dominance of the social, worldly body. It is important to note that both are represented, and both contribute to the meaning of the whole monument. Similarly, Caesar's corpse is not a mere corpse, but an indispensable part of the monument Antony is erecting. The medieval notion of the King's two bodies, as worked out by Kantorowitz, and the representation of the social body on the top of these double monuments elucidates the significance of Caesar's spirit, Caesar's social body that emerges from Antony's oration. In this theory, the living king is only a mortal incarnation of the Dignity, of the immortal idea of the King. The spirit set afoot by Antony is the immortal Caesar, Caesar as a Dignity, which will be incarnated by a long line of caesars in Roman and European history. Caesar is immortalized as an institution by his death and by the rhetoric of Antony, and it takes little effort to see Caesar's revenging spirit manifested in the revenging Octavius, i.e. in the next Caesar, already so called in *Antony and Cleopatra*.

Antony creates a new meaning, a new spirit of Caesar in the market-place, and he makes it accepted by the Plebeians by presenting Caesar's body as the physical basis for this meaning, as the body of the spirit. The revelation of the corpse is embedded in a whole process of exposure, of showing: it is clearly theatrical in its illusory identification of "shadow" (Caesar's spirit or shadow) with "substance", with the actor of the role. Antony is pointing at the holes on Caesar's mantle one by one, and he is thus actually re-enacting the murder of Caesar. It is at the end of this carefully staged performance that the disclosure of the body comes. By then it has been framed, it is part of the performance *of something*: and this undercuts its ontological status as a direct point of access to truth, as the thing that is simply itself - even if we ignore the verbal frame provided by Antony, working heavily on the audience's expectations and forging them so as not to have any other choice but seeing Caesar as they actually do. The body is consciously presented by Antony as something "just there", though it is in fact a character in a stage-play, an actor in a role. It is not "a thing as it is really", but a part of the re-presentation of something. The fact that this something (Caesar's assassination) has actually happened to this particular body is very helpful in blurring the distinction between, or rather equating a hypothetical "original" and a performance, a necessarily interpretative presentation of it.

As we have noted, Antony has been given the cue (though unknowingly) by Cassius' "How many ages hence / Shall this our lofty scene be acted over ..." (*Caes*.3.1.111-2): Shakespeare's play is highly conscious of its theatricality. This self-reflectiveness, in our interpretation, is setting the scene for new interpretations, new versions, new meanings of the "same" scene, already within *Julius Caesar*. In this sense, Shakespeare's play is acting over both Caesar's murder performed by Brutus and Cassius, and also Antony's performance. Prospero can be Shakespeare's greatest stage-playwright, but Antony is his greatest stage-director. Prospero is often seen as Shakespeare's equivalent on stage, creating a new play: but Antony is more like an Elizabethan dramatist, re-writing, re-staging an old play or story.[35] This reading of Antony as stage-director, staging Caesar's death in a compelling new performance, is given further relevance by Sidney's lines on tragedy:

> So that the right use of Comedy will (I think) by nobody be blamed, and much less of the high and excellent Tragedy, that openeth the greatest wounds, and showeth forth the ulcers that are covered with tissue; that maketh kings fear to be tyrants, and tyrants manifest their tyrannical humours; that, with stirring the affects of admiration and commiseration, teacheth the uncertainty of this world ...
> (*Apology* 117.33-118.2)

Acting emerges here as the most powerful form of interpretation: the illusory reality, especially when it manages to trigger off a suspension of disbelief, becomes the image of the past event, and invests it with new meaning. The question differentiating two types of world-views ("serious" and "rhetorical", *à la* Fish, perhaps) is, whether you take an ultimate pretext, the "real thing" for granted, and take all performances for approaches to this fixed centre, or - as Antony does - you decentre interpretation, take interpretations for "texts" or "things" in their own right, with the first performance as possibly of a certain prominence, but only as another interpretation, the first among equals. Antony's performance also gives a hint of how interpretations try to preclude scepticism, although their own very presence - the emergence of different interpretations - would inescapably suggest it. Every interpretation asserts a claim to exclusive validity, to the title of the only

35 These parallels are also supported by the fact that, for all we know, *The Tempest* is an entirely "new" play: there is no *Ur-Tempest*, whereas nobody would consider the plot of *Julius Caesar* as a story invented by Shakespeare.

appropriate or indeed the only possible reading. Each image of something would claim to be the real image, showing the thing itself, and thus to be in direct connection with it. But in fact everything looked at in search of a meaning turns into a sign, and signs are inevitably parts of systems of signs: they are framed, interpreted, shaped by contexts. Thus the thing or image becomes part of a performance, of a re-enactment of something, and is finally determined by that interpretation. Caesar's saying, "for always I am Caesar" (*Caes.*1.2.211) can be true, but what 'being Caesar' actually means, undergoes a wide range of transformations already within *Julius Caesar*, not to mention the interpretations which the play and Caesar as a major historical and literary character have received.

The questions of play, re-enactment and interpretation can persistently be brought into play - throughout the play. The games Cassius is playing with Brutus's self-image, Calphurnia's dream and its two readings by Caesar and Decius Brutus, the scene with Cinna the Poet, or, to bring examples from the end of the play as well, Cassius's shortsightedness, his last appearance where he really misconstrues everything, as Titinius says (*Caes.*5.3.84), are all very accessible for such an approach. Instead of commenting upon them, I will now look at a possible precursor of Act 3 scene 2 of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, or possibly a precursor of this reading of the play, in Quintilian.[36]

> Actions as well as words may be employed to move the court to tears. Hence the custom of bringing persons into court wearing squalid and unkempt attire, and of introducing their children and parents, and it is with this in view that we see blood-stained swords, fragments of bone taken from the wound, and garments spotted with blood, displayed by the accusers, wounds stripped of their dressings, and scourged bodies bared to view. The impression produced by such exhibitions is generally enormous, since they seem to bring the spectators face to face with the cruel facts. For example, the sight of the bloodstains on the purple-bordered toga of Gaius Caesar, which was carried at the head of his funeral procession, aroused the Roman people to fury. They knew that he had been killed; they had even seen his body stretched upon the bier: but his garment, still wet with his blood, brought such a vivid image of the crime before their minds, that Caesar seemed not to have been

36 It is neglected by all the detailed accounts of the play's sources I know of: by Muir, by Bullough, and by all annotated editions of the play I have been able to check - possibly because the short passage describing the events does not really add anything to Plutarch' account of them.

> murdered, but to be being murdered before their very eyes.
> (Quintilian VI.i.30-31)[37]

The account of the exposure of Caesar's mantle and the relevance Quintilian ascribes to it correspond quite closely to our reading of their counterparts in Shakespeare. The similarity in the telling of the events is not surprising: Plutarch might well have been the source for this story certainly very well-known in antiquity. But Quintilian's way of putting what the effects were is remarkable. Antony's "staging" of the murder is here matched by an explanation of the crowd's outrage by referring to the idea of visual presence. The passage can be seen not merely as a source in the strict sense, i.e. as a source where the story could have been taken from, but more importantly, as a precursor that Antony's speech can be contrasted and juxtaposed with.

The section quoted is part of a treatise on (mainly public, forensic) persuasion: it is an example of "moulding and transforming the judges to the attitude which we desire." (Quintilian VI.ii.1) Although Quintilian seems most of the time to assume that the pleader is trying to convince the judges of the truth, there is nothing in his treatment of persuasion that would not allow for the use of these same means for ends virtually unrestrained. (cp. VI.i.7) The pleader's task is to defend, to represent his client's case *as if it was true*. It is the judges' task to decide which party's point of view will be accepted as rightful: to decide, that is, what the truth is; and their decision is clearly determined by the orator's performance. At a stage we even read: "the peculiar task of the orator rises when the mind of the judges require force to move them, and their thoughts have actually be lead away from the contemplation of truth." (VI.ii.5) So, the persuasive power of images is actually a tool the orator should use for his particular purposes. Quintilian's examination of the *visions* and of their communicative use (VI.ii.26-32, quoted above at length) is an explanation, first of all, of how to impose those emotions "we want to produce in the mind of the judge" on ourselves: he talks about "the *appearance* of sincerity" (VI.ii.27). In the passage on actors moved by their roles he asks:

> But if the mere delivery of *words written by another* has the power to set our souls on fire with fictitious emotion, what will the orator do whose duty it is *to picture to himself the facts* and who has it in his power to fuel

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37 cp. also the Benetton poster out in winter 1993/94, a photo of a dead(?) Bosnian/Serbian soldier's blood-stained clothes, with a bullet-hole in the tee-shirt.

> the same emotion in his client whose interests are at stake?
> (Quintilian VI.ii.35, italics mine)

In this context, the expression "words written by another" suggests an identification of picturing the facts to oneself and of writing those words oneself. I would here argue that Quintilian's short relation of the effects of the sight of Caesar's blood-stained mantle is contextualized to an effect similar to that of our reading of Antony's speech and his interpretive and interpreted use of visual images. Despite his insistence on the unmediatedness of the visual, and on its power flowing from this unmediatedness, Quintilian does, in fact, evolve a theory where the unmediatedness is the attribute only of that part of the communicative process which goes on between two minds, and does not eventually suggest a real access to truth, only an illusory one. The possibility of unmediated knowledge is just an illusion, but an extremely powerful one. Making the murder of Caesar present to the plebs' mind is not (neither in Shakespeare nor in Quintilian) the presentation of "truth", nor are any of the stagings of this "lofty scene" in "states unborn, and accents yet unknown." Neither is, in fact, the "original" scene of murder: there are two Acts before it, consisting of little other than preparations, portents, and of interpretations preceding their object - belied, transformed, or fulfilled by Caesar's death, which is thus an interpretative act itself.[38] All acts and performances are interpretations of other acts and performances without ever having access to an "original", and theatre is the place of making (new) sense of the past. This is not to say that these re-presentations are false - in our reading, the question about the "truth" of the events of history, of the past, is not a very

38 A significant example of this would be Marcus Brutus fashioning himself (or rather Cassius fashioning him) after Junius Brutus, who ousted Tarquinius Superbus. This parallelism has not been given much attention yet, though it has been noted by Girard, for example, who juxtaposes Tarquin and Caesar as "the two founding fathers" (203-4). The recurrent mentioning of the statue is worth further consideration. In Plutarch we read: "Marcus Brutus came of that Junius Brutus for whom the ancient Romans made his statue of brass to be set up in the Capitol with the images of the kings, holding a naked sword in his hand" (102) Brutus is fashioned after this *image* of Junius Brutus, with sword in his hand: and Brutus's fall can possibly be ascribed to this interpretation. Junius Brutus, according the chronicles, founded the Republic by expelling, not by killing the tyrant. Thus, the conspirators are the first to abandon the "original" meaning, in favour of a heavily contextualized visual interpretation of it - but, as they are not conscious enough the labyrinths of interpretations, take it for the only possible reading, and do not even consider options other than murder. So, instead of the intended reiteration of the republican past, the reiteration of the founding act of what they want to return to, they produce a highly independent reading of it - to their own, and to the republicanism's peril.

productive, not even an intelligible one. The view endorsed here is not some sort of a melancholic scepticism, but rather "La gaya scienza" of Nietzsche: this does not suggest that truth is out of our reach, but that the idea of impartial, therefore eternal and unchangeable meaning[39] is simply meaningless. Our questions are not about the truth (in this sense), but about the uses and illusions of the past; and so are the questions of *our* Shakespeare, and the point in our excavations in Renaissance concepts of rhetoric and the visual (if any), is that they might help us make more of such a Shakespeare.

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